

Message Text

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44

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OPR-02 SY-05 OC-05 CCO-00 CIAE-00

COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 AID-05

OMB-01 CU-02 PM-03 H-02 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /088 W
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P R 041112Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5080

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

DIA WASHDC

COMUSMACTHAI BANGKOK TH

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 10276

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, ELAB, TH

SUBJECT: THAILAND - GENERAL STRIKE FAILS TO GET OFF THE
GROUND ON ITS FIRST DAY

REF: A) BANGKOK 10181

B) FBIS BANGKOK DATE/TIME GROUP 031553Z JUN 75

SUMMARY: MORNING PAPERS ON JUNE 4, THE DAY A GENERAL STRIKE
WAS SCHEDULED TO BEGIN, REPORTED LABOR ACTIVIST THOETPHUM
CHAI'DI'S CLAIM THAT AN ATTEMPT HAD BEEN MADE ON HIS LIFE.
AS OF 1600 HOURS, ALL BANGKOK'S VITAL SERVICES CONTINUED,
THERE WERE SIGNIFICANT INDICATIONS THAT THE GREAT MAJORITY
OF LABORERS HAD NOT YET LEFT THEIR JOBS, AND A MODERATE-
SIZED DEMONSTRATION (CROWD ESTIMATE 1,000 PLUS) WAS GATHERED
AT LUMPINI PARK ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE DUSIT THANI HOTEL.
END SUMMARY.

1. BOTH BANGKOK'S ENGLISH LANGUAGE MORNING NEWSPAPERS FRONT
PAGED A REPORT THAT GUNMEN HAD TRIED TO ASSASSINATE LABOR
ACTIVIST THOETPHUM CHAI'DI OF THE HOTEL AND HOSTEL WORKERS
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ASSOCIATION OF THAILAND. ACCORDING TO THESE REPORTS THOETPHUM

CLAIMED TWO GUNMEN WEARING DARK GLASSES FIRED TEN SHOTS AT HIM ON THE EVENING OF JUNE 3 BUT ONLY SUCCEEDED IN NICKING HIS WRIST. (COMMENT: AVM SOMPHON, DIRECTOR OF AIR FORCE INTELLIGENCE TOLD THE ASSISTANT AIR ATTACHE PRIOR TO THE REPORTED ATTEMPT ON THOETPHUM'S LIFE, THAT STUDENT AND LABOR ACTIVIST LEADERS WERE "MARKED MEN." RIVAL LABOR LEADERS CLAIM THOETPHUM SHOT HIMSELF IN A SEARCH FOR FAVORABLE PUBLICITY. THE RELATIVELY LIGHT WOUND TO THOETPHUM, DESPITE THE HEAVY VOLLEY OF SHELLS, NOT TO SPEAK OF THE TACTICAL ADVANTAGE A REPORTED ATTEMPT ON THOETPHUM'S LIFE WOULD HAVE IN HEATING UP THE THREATENED GENERAL STRIKE, ALSO CAST SOME DOUBT ON THE LABOR ACTIVIST'S CLAIM.)

2. AS OF 1600 JUNE 4, A GENERAL STRIKE WAS SUPPOSED TO PARALYZE BANGKOK, ALL THE CITY'S VITAL SERVICES CONTINUED. THERE WERE NO SIGNS OF ANYTHING ABNORMAL SAVE IN THE AREA OF THE DUSIT THANI HOTEL, STANDARD GARMENT FACTORY AND LUMPINI PARK. A CROWD ESTIMATED AT AROUND 1,000 HAD GATHERED AT LUMPINI TO "AWAIT THE GOVERNMENT'S REPLY TO LABOR'S DEMANDS." THE CROWD SAT OR STOOD PEACEFULLY UNDER AWNINGS PROVIDED BY THE DEMONSTRATION'S ORGANIZERS AND LISTENED TO THE USUAL HARANGUES FROM STUDENT AND LABOR ACTIVISTS. A FEW PICTURES OF THE KING WERE IN EVIDENCE AS WELL AS SEVERAL POSTERS ATTACKING THE GOVERNMENT AND CAPITALISTS.

3. A SHORT DISTANCE DOWN THE ROAD STANDARD GARMENT FACTORY AND ADJOINING BUILDINGS CONTINUED TO BE FESTOONED WITH POSTERS ATTACKING POLICE INTERVENTION IN LABOR DISPUTES. A FEW OF THE YOUNG GIRL STRIKERS WERE STILL IN EVIDENCE AND ONE OR TWO OF THEM WERE USING A LOUDSPEAKER TO DRAW ATTENTION TO THEIR STRUGGLE.

4. ALTHOUGH PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT DID NOT APPEAR ON TV AS ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED, THE RTG'S GENERALLY FORTHCOMING STATEMENT ON LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS MIGHT HAVE HELPED TO DEFUSE THE CONFRONTATION. THE NEW RTG POLICY INCLUDED A PROMISE TO ESTABLISH LABOR COURTS, LONG A DEMAND OF BOTH LABOR AND MANAGEMENT.

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5. COMMENT. THE THREATENED GENERAL STRIKE IS OFF TO A VERY SLOW START. MOST SIGNS POINT TO A FIZZLE FOR THE ACTIVISTS. AN OFFICIAL AT THE LABOR DEPARTMENT SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD ASSUMED A CLEAR STAND AGAINST VIOLENCE AND THREATNEED IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION IF STRIKERS TRIED TO CUT OFF VITAL SERVICES. THE LABOR DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL PREDICTED THAT NO GENERAL STRIKE WOULD DEVELOP AND THAT ACTIVISTS WOULD, AS A RESULT, LOSE SOME FACE. PERHAPS THE MOST LASTING RESULT

OF THIS LABOR-MANAGEMENT-GOVERNMENT CONFRONTATION IS THE
RTG'S NEW POLICY ON LABOR RELATIONS (REFTEL A).
WHITEHOUSE

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